

1/13/2014: Fran McCaffery teleconference transcript (premium)

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Below is a written transcript of Iowa head coach Fran McCaffery's teleconference on Monday with the Big Ten media:

McCaffery's opening statement:

"Well, I think for us, it was a terrific week. You know, any time in this league you can play two games in a week and win both – one at home, one on the road – obviously Ohio State is one of the premier programs in the country, a team that was playing extremely well. For us to go in there and play as well as we did I think says a lot about our progress.

"We had a lot of opportunities in that game, you know, to kind of go away and we just kept coming. I'm very proud of my team and how we performed this week."

On the "fine line" in the Big Ten when it comes to competing for a league title:

"Well you know, it's like anything else. It's probably too early to speculate on those things. But it's kind of the nature of things. You're going to project and you're going to hope and you know, you're going to try to honestly evaluate. You know, there's a lot of people that are saying, 'Hey, I really like this team,' and I love my team.

"You know, that said, we've only played four games in league play and we've got a lot more to go and the league is so evenly balanced. I think the challenge is can we consistently

perform at the level that we have so far. You know, we have a fairly decent data in terms of we've played 17 games. But I think the important thing is can we continue to get the kind of play that we're getting out of the people that are doing what they're doing and then additionally, get what we got yesterday from Josh Oglesby.

"He had been hurt and we had great expectation for him and to see play the way he played, it's a great feeling as a coach for him, but for our team, we need him. You know, and to see [Melsahn] Basabe play the way he's playing. And then you look at a guy like [Zach] McCabe who was playing so well and didn't play well yesterday, but we were able to overcome that because others played well and I think that's the beauty of our team.

"So you know, I don't want to get ahead of ourselves. But I guess when it's all said and done, if people are talking that way, it's better than if they're not talking that way."

On having the confidence to go on the road and not only win, but overcome adversity while doing so:

"Well you know, in particular against [Ohio State], you know, it's often times turnovers that lead to those runs. You know, those 8-0 runs, 9-0 runs. They already have a 5-point lead and then all of a sudden, it's getting away from you. So for us, you know, when they went on their run, we just weren't scoring the ball.

"But we weren't panicking. We were running our offense. You know, our defense was O.K. in that stretch. It wasn't horrible. So we made some adjustments defensively and then, you know, we had a lineup on the floor that I thought was one of our better, if not the best offensive lineup, on the floor and then we made a few buckets. And then when we came back, we came back a couple of times, but it's one thing to come back when you're down three. It's another thing to come back when you're down nine.

"We got down nine and the crowd was involved and you know, we just really maintained our composure at that point in the game and I thought that was a big step for us because even then, it was kind of back to even. It wasn't like we had a lead, so we had to get home from there and you know, then it became [Devyn] Marble, [Aaron] White, Basabe, [Jarrod] Uthoff, Oglesby and then we put Mike Gesell back in the game, who had a spectacular game I thought."

On how good he feels about his team's maturity and mental strength after beating Ohio State:

"Well you know, I think coming into the season I felt very good about it. Last year, we were a young team. This year, I didn't consider ourselves a young team, so I felt like it was time for us to kind of play the way we played yesterday. But then the reality is you have to go out and do it."

"You talk about it and you can play well. You can play well and lose. But you know, we've done a little bit of both this year. We've played well and lost. We've played well and won. You know, we won an overtime game, we lost an overtime game. We've won in a shootout, we beat a great team on the road, we held on at home against an up-and-coming team."

"So it's, as you know, every game in this league, you've got to be ready and it's just part of the journey and for us, I think yesterday was a big step."

On what he hoped for his zone defense to accomplish against Ohio State coming into Sunday's game:

"You know, it's interesting because we didn't come into the game expecting to play as much zone as we did. You know, the way the game started, our man was fine. They had a little run. They made a run at us and we broke down a few times, so we went to the zone and the zone looked pretty good in the first half, so now going into the second half, we felt like we could go either way."

"The interesting thing was in that one stretch, they started ball-screening and running a guy under and spacing us appropriately. I mean, they ran really good stuff and we weren't getting where we needed to get to and normally, I'll get out of it there because they were scoring. But I felt like if we could make a couple of adjustments, we could stay in it and be effective and I thought Oglesby, White and Uthoff in particular could cover up the wings and get to the shooters as quickly as we did, you know, really kind of kept us where you know, we were contesting shots, but also in a position to guard against penetration.

"Of course, they're a terrific penetration team. I think that's one of the things, their speed and quickness is going to concern anybody that plays that team. The other thing is, we're big. You know, as long as we can contest and not give them seconds, you know, the zone can be real effective and you can run out of it. We kind of were able to do that. I mean, it wasn't perfect. But I think as we moved throughout the second half, it became the best way for us to go and that was pretty much a game adjustment.

"That team has got enough size, enough shooters, enough quickness and enough, you know, basketball I.Q. to play well against the zone. You know, it's not going to work all the time. But it worked for us yesterday."